

RESEARCH PAPER

Tochi Levy Corps- 1895

Raising of Levy on North Western Frontier by
the British

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Tochi Levy Corps was the very first militia raised in Waziristan and acted as mother for the subsequent militia raising. Thus its culture and its evolution plays a key role in the militia.

Tochi Levy Corps 1895

By 1895 Waziristan was divided into two main administrative areas the North & South basing upon the two rivers namely Tochi in North and Gomal in South with the plateau of Razmak (6666 feet) forming the boundary. Tribes in North Waziristan were placed under the Deputy Commissioner Bannu and South under Deputy Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan; both working under Commissioner Derajat who was Mr Bruce. After 1895 political officers were placed at Tochi & Wana with special powers for northern and southern parts working under the Commissioner Derajat. Tochi River collects the drainage of the Afghan districts of Sarabi & Birmal and on British side that of Shawal and all the valleys running into Daurs. It runs along the hills north of Datta Khel, Boya, MiranShah, and Khajauri and joins Kurram River east of Lakki. Its total length in the North Waziristan is approximately 80 miles. This river is the main source of irrigation in this area.

The valley may be divided into four distinct parts. Upper Tochi Valley from DwaToi to Muhammad Khel, from Muhammad Khel to Isha Pass is termed as Upper Daur where as the Lower Daur from Isha Pass to Khajauri and then from Khajauri to the Bannu Plains is termed as Lower Tochi. Floods are rare but when they occurred, they seldom last more than half a day. The traders of Ghazna and Kabul largely preferred the Gomal Pass route where as the Tochi Pass was more frequently used by the Powindahs.

North Waziristan covers an area of 2318 square miles. Tochi Valley from Datta Khel to Khajauri is fertile and intensively cultivated with the water of the Tochi River. On its North West is Afghanistan, in the North East is Kurram Agency, in the South is South Waziristan, and in the East are Bannu and Kohat Divisions.

Much of the North Waziristan is incredibly bare, The area is in reality largely unpopulated, the tribesmen congregating in villages and hamlets situated in the less arid portions of the valley or the areas which lie within their reach of grazing grounds. It would appear from the topography of the area that at one time, the whole region was largely covered with woods but the reckless cutting of trees has altered the character of land and climate. In the hills, cultivation is practiced on every flat piece of ground. Due to these natural conditions, the population remains pastoral & migratory.

Khajauri is the gateway to North Waziristan from Frontier Region Bannu. As the name indicates, it has an abundance of date palms covering an area of about five square miles. It is situated on the left bank of Tochi River at its junction with Shana Algad. Other main towns in North Waziristan are DattaKhel. MiranShah, Boya, MirAli, Razmak, Shiwa, Dosalli and Ghulam Khan. All these are located on the riverbanks or water source. Small villages are scattered all over the agency. The inhabitants live in villages of all sizes. The general grouping and frequency of villages vary from valley to valley but mud bricks wall and towers invariably defend these. A peculiarity of many Wazir villages is their close proximity to large caves, to which the tribesmen have access as dwelling places in winter for the sake of protection from harsh weather. These caves are also admirable as an air raid shelters. The way of life is as primitive as it was almost thousand years in every aspect not only in terms of construction of houses but also in the form of social values, which are termed as Riway. Each village is the home of a certain clan which for all practical purposes acts and behaves as a sovereign state, formulating and ratifying treaties and declaring war providing amnesty and shelter to outlaws from other clans depending upon either a collective decision or at times acting at their own will. Surrounding grazing grounds are joint property and so are fruit trees and orchards.

There is no central hereditary power junta rather it varies with time to time. Polygamy is a common practice, which becomes a necessity because of frequent feuds and war. There is no concept

of population control rather more the children stronger is the clan and tribe. Women are treated with respect and are seldom seen outside their walled compounds. Kidnapping or rape of females is a rarity. The practising religion is the Sunni sect of Islam. Elders are respected, Jirga is the parliament of the clan where collective decisions are taken and are bound to be observed.

North Waziristan thus includes the country of the Darwesh Khel and Gurbuz Wazirs, the latter live between the Tochi and Khost Valley and after Durand Line came under the Kabul regime, however a small clan occupies area astride Tochi Pass and southern slopes of Mazdak, which came under Delhi regime. Daur was another tribe that came under the North Waziristan apart from Bhattanis who to some extent came under the control of Deputy Commissioner Bannu. The District of Bannu was formed in 1861 and it had three sub administrative tehsils namely Bannu itself, Lakki and Mianwali. In 1895 the Marwats were the numerous tribe within Bannu having a population of 52000, Wazirs numbered 24000 and Bhattanis a mere 2000. Bhattanis were the first tribe to have a Levy and as such, they were not in the good books of Wazirs (Mahsuds).

Raising of Tochi Levies 1895-1900

In November 1889 the proposal for raising of Levies for the Waziristan was floated aim was to keep peace in the area and above all to escort the officers while on a tour of the area. Commissioner Bruce recommended that 12 Mahsuds be employed as non commissioned officers and 112 mounted men at a cost of Rupees 28,440 per annum, he further recommended that four non commissioned officers and 54 mounted men be taken from Darwesh Khel of Wana and from Sheranis two non commissioned officers and 23 mounted men. In January 1890 the tribal levies were raised but not according to the strength recommended by Bruce the initial posts were Mortaza, Spinkai, Kach, Khajauri Kach and Kashmir- Kar. Soon the Kajaury Kach post came under attack from the Taji Khel the garrison was held by the 80 odd lately enlisted Wazir Levies. Syed Akbar Shah and his brother Sanobar Shah both Mahsuds of Kanigoram were in charge of the Levies as non commissioned officers. In October 1890 the boundary between Balochistan and Punjab was settled and also the boundary between Balochistan and Waziristan was finalised which runs north of Gomal River from Khudar-Domandi to Khajauri Kach. In January 1891 the Levies posts were earmarked they were supposed to collect the revenues the question of collecting the revenue from tribes was raised by the Punjab Government but it was pended on the advice of Commissioner Bruce. In June 1891 Punjab Government formulated the scheme for opening of Tochi Pass on the recommendation of Commissioner Bruce who also insisted on approving of his levies scheme which was till then being given a cold treatment mainly on the basis of financial aspects but now the opening of Tochi Pass was intractably linked with the safety of caravans still Bruce's scheme was not approved whole heartedly and partial blessing was given at an annual cost of 18000 Rupees annually. The Durand Line agreement brought a drastic and pragmatic change in the attitude of Punjab Government towards the Levies and on 13th September approval was given for the raising of Waziri Levies and in March 1895 Tochi Levies was raised at Idak.¹

The Tochi Valley demarcation was completed by April 1895² and the escort troops which included three infantry and one cavalry regiments and one battery field artillery were pulled back and

¹ Richard Isaac Forward Policy and its Results, p-315 also see pages 265 & 320 also see Foreign Department Frontier Letter No's 164-167, August 1896. Miran Shah Archives.

² Border & Administration Report for the year 1895-1896, Political Agent Archives Miran Shah.

camped at Idak³. On 7th April 1895 a delegation of 500 Daur and Darwesh Khel Maliks put forward a petition to political officer at Miran Shah where by they showed the interest of coming under the British protectorate on certain conditions. In the time between the offer and acceptance the political administration distributed ten thousand rupees among these tribes just to keep their morale high. The agreement evinced Rupees 66000 annual as Maliki and service allowance. Troops were moved up into Degan (Mohammad Khel) and detachments were left at Shinpai, Kotal, Idak and Miran Shah with the passage of years these very initial posts became the hub of militia and scouts. On 25th July 1895 the camp was moved down from Degan to Boya and then from Boya to MiranShah which thus became the political headquarters. On 18th October 1895 the Government of India accepted the Daur offer of coming under the British protection, it was also spelled out that political control should be exercised over the Darwesh Khel both in Tochi Valley beyond Kunigarha and in tracts bordering Daur. Thus the Daur territory became protected areas. A total of Rupees 63,736 were distributed among Daur and Darwesh Khel , Daur were given 4,884 Rupees as Maliki and 10, 980 as service where as Darwesh Khel were given 16,516 Rupees as Maliki and 31, 356 Rupees as service which is a fair indication of how the tribes stand in the eyes of the British political administration.

In December 1895 the building of Levy Posts on the main road up to the valley commenced and towers were erected at Chauki, Ajan, Roitsa, Galemot, Shinnari, Kotnil& Khawaja Khel in Bakka Khel country in lower Daur. In January a temporary civil post was constructed at Idak which later became the home of Levy. In January 1896 the temporary accommodation for the political officer was made and road from Bannu to Miran Shah was improved.

Life was not idle there was always something going on in one way or the other. On 7th April 1895 a langri of 6thPunjab Infantry (P.I) was murdered within the limits of Khaddi village, on 13th May Lieutenant Lemond of the same unit along with his syce was attacked by four tribesmen at Boya as he was marching to Degan with his escort; both died but three of the attackers were cut down on the spot. On 31st July Lieutenant Campbell was shot in knee. Justice was through the Jirga for the murder of the langri a fine of Rupees 100 was paid but in case of Campbell the Jirga acquitted the accused due to lack of substantive evidence. The political officer Mr Caisson was stabbed through the liver on 13th March 1896 by a Daur, Caisson survived. Slowly and gradually the rules of the game were being established among the tribes and the British with give and take here and there. For instance on 16thAugust 1896 one Gul Hassan Daur fired at Boya Post but managed to escape and instead his brother was put in jail. In 1895 there were nine murders, 39 theft cases, 10 house breaking and 140 cases of hurt in the protected areas and 272 civil cases were decided, a total of 1100 Rupees fine was imposed in cases against the government⁴. The cases within the tribal areas were not the jurisdiction of the political officer and they were settled through Jirga who at times invited political agent for arbitration for instance in June 1895 the water dispute between the Daur and Tori Khel of Tappi Village was amicably resolved.

The raising and over all administrative structure of the Tochi Valley was governed by the Foreign Department (Frontier) of Government of India however the on ground actions were the domain of Punjab Government.

The continuous harassing of the political and military establishment finally touched the limits of government patience when the Muharrir FoudaBaur a Hindu was murdered at Datta Khel, a force

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

of one infantry battalion, two companies of infantry and one battery of artillery along with forty sowars moved from Miran Shah to Datta Khel and camp was established a mile from Datta Khel. In December 1896 the telegraph line was completed; communication was established between Miran Shah and Datta Khel. It was also decided in December 1896 to make Miran Shah as the political headquarters with a very strong advance post at Datta Khel. Levy posts at Saidgi, Khajauri, Katerisia, Idak, Lam Ghundi, Isha, Muhammad Khel and Kanirogha were completed by end 1896 but 'no progress made on military posts and roads'.⁵ In the same year the cultivation of sugar cane was introduced in Lower Daur it was a success later cultivation of rice was also experimented by having seed from Peshawar, an irrigation Darogha was appointed and Daur agreed to bear his expenses collectively. It is obvious that the Daur who had agreed to be part of British political system were now reaping the good harvest, the political officer noted that the 'general conduct of the Daur through the year very good'.⁶ It does not mean that there was peace in the area but it is a relative term because majority of the cases were committed against the government property. In July 1896 42 goats of the Levy were looted about two miles above Idak, two coolies namely Jaimal and Jahandur were murdered near Pai Khel later Imanzai Khel and Daur paid a fine of Rupees 60 for them. There were eighteen case of wire cutting, Jalal Khan alone committed five offenses he infested the road near Isha. There were 57 cases of criminal nature committed against the British Government in the year 1896 which include four cases of murder and thirty nine cases of theft and this also includes the theft of General Bird's luggage which was looted near Datta Khel after the sowar of his camel belonging to 1st Punjab Cavalry name Niaz Muhammad was shot dead. The number of tribal cases were 286 which included 17 cases of murders and 109 cases of robbery only 17 cases were such which involved women; fine inflicted was 797 and compensation awarded was 7362 Rupees.

Levies were utilised to spare the regular troops of chasing the minor cases however there was no guarantee that a minor case will not erupt into a major issue of peace in the Tochi Valley. Levy posts were regularly attacked but an analysis of the reports reveal that over all the Levies lost less number of rifles as compared to the regular troops and further more their casualties were also less as they adhered to centuries old principles of war as applicable in the area. They kept a good understanding with the natives; in majority of the cases the stolen/looted items were recovered. Levies used drummers on their posts to warn the adjoining villages about an incident. On the night of 20th August 1897 Murad Shah a Jemadar of Tochi Levies was killed by a gang of raiders whom he attempted to arrest single handily while they were driving off with loot which included a dozen of donkeys from Hindu traders. The crimes that took place in the Valley ranged from burning of grass being used by troops, theft and stealing of weapons, looting on the highway, kidnapping the travellers. In August 1897 the work started on the construction of Levy Post at Datta Khel and was completed by the end of year. The cart wheel road between Bannu and Datta Khel was completed by end 1897.

Maizar 1897

In 1896 Political Agent Mr H.A.Gee was confident enough to claim the whole of Tochi Valley under the British jurisdiction, he was sadly mistaken in his approach. In autumn of 1896 the political and military headquarters were moved forward in the Tochi Valley to the Datta Khel the last of the Madda Khel Wazirs homeland. In an incident the munshi a Hindu who looked after the correspondences for the Madda Khel was murdered, resultantly a collective fine was imposed which

⁵ *Tochi Valley Administrative Report 1896-97.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

the Malik Sadda Khan of Madda Khel accepted and imposed. Dreplari a sub clan having their kots few miles west of Madda Khel in the Maizar Plateau refused to pay the fines rather insisting that guilty party should pay in full. To settle the dispute Mr Gee went there with an escort of 300 foot soldiers and 16 sowars along with two field guns. This force was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Browne and had four other British officers also. They marched out from camp at Datta Khel moving westward for eight miles skirting supporting Sherrani a Madda Khel village and traversing another two miles they forded Shawal and Tochi rivers to reach an elevation of 4600 feet Dotoi the last post was another two miles further west.

The force was lured by the Dreplari into a garden on the pretext to have more comfortable place for consuming breakfast which Malik Sadda Khan has arranged. The British force took precautions yet they moved into the garden thus coming into the effective range of rifle fire from the village. All in all, British officers were wounded and one died of wounds.

British retaliated by sending two brigades from Punjab which after great difficulty crossed Indus at Khushal Garh and then marched through Kohat – Bannu- Mir Ali – MiranShah – Boya to Data Khel. The Madda Khels and Dreplaris had migrated to higher summer grazing grounds, others present did not offered any stiff esistance. The village and the towers were razed and operation was called off in January 1898.

Tochi Levies manned the posts and guided the troops. Their navigational skills were of greatest use. They acted as the bridge between the army and the natives.

On 22nd March 1898, 99 Hindu coolies of government stores were attacked near Ghalekot while encamped for the night, Levies pursued the robbers along with Village Chiga and most of the loot was recovered. On 23rd March Levy post at Saidgi came under attack and one bandit Saif Ali Kabul Khel was killed. The regular troops were the target of the native miscreants on 16th March 1898 a sepoy of 33rd P.I was killed with stones while he was supervising the grazing of goats, In July 1898 a Naik of 20th Native infantry disappeared from Miran Shah Post and his bones were recovered after two days almost three miles away in the hills. The most serious was the attack on 3rd August 1898 when a gang from Afghanistan attacked the coolie's camp at Kanirogha Levy Post, seven coolies were killed on the spot and two died later, offenders were the Bakkka Khel out laws settled in Khost. Very next day the luggage camel of the Levy Commandant Mr Donald was attacked and looted it was carried out by Aziz Shabi Khel. A levy shepherd was murdered just 700 yards away from the Boya Post on 17th August 1898 which gives a fair picture of the living conditions of that era. Jalal Khel Mahsud and Mohmit Khel Wazirs were fined Rupees 1000 for this. There were few cases which involved women also and it gives an insight into the culture of the area. On 11th April 1898 a man was killed at Tappi in Daur by another inhabitant of village who was having an intrigue with the deceased's wife, he hired an assassin to perform this task. In May 1898 a Johar woman who was living in bigamy at Spalgha was put to death by her first husband. On 2nd September 1898 an unmarried girl was shot dead by a Waziri who claimed her earlier as part of a settlement of feud but his claim was rejected by the Jirga, he was arrested and put to jail. In January 1899 a murder took place in Daur area in which a Talib of desperate character was involved the back ground of the murder dates back to almost forty years ago when the deceased had killed a member of the assassin family thus he now settled the feud. By 1898 the concept of having a licence for the weapon within the protected areas was introduced and a register was kept to have a record of all such rifles, over 200 licences were issued. Also the criminal acts were imposed in the area thus criminals were put to jail at Peshawar, Bannu or at Montgomery.

Tochi civil establishment was revised in August 1898 under Mr H.A. Anderson the Commissioner and Superintendent of Derajat Division. Levies were stationed at Boya, Idak and

Saidgi, a Naib Tehsildar was also stationed at Idak, there were three tehsils in the Tochi Valley, Datta Khel and Miran Shah were other two tehsils. Mr Lorimar was the political officer at Miran Shah where as Lala Bogha Ram was the native assistant political officer even at Datta Khel a Hindu Lala Khushal Mal was performing the duties of Naib Tehsildar. It was at the end of the year 1898 that Tochi Levy Corps as it was known officially was equipped with uniform and other equipment initially 122 rifles were issued and another 100 were issued after few months. Mr Donald became its first commandant 'result was an immediate improvement in spirit and efficiency'⁷.

Establishment

Officer in charge of Levies was Mr Donald where as Risaldar Major Muhammad Amin Khan was the Native Political Assistant in regards of Levies; he was not a permanent appointment holder rather on attachment, Sattar Khan and Zaffar Khan remained as native adjutants drawing a pay of Rupees 80 per month.

Levies Commandant Mr Donald was authorised an English language clerk for Levies register on 18th June 1898⁸. The pay of native adjutant was Rupees 60 whereas that of English clerk was drawing Rupees 30 and an extra 60 Rupees was the deputation pay. Commandant apart from having one English clerk also had one muharrir, two orderlies drawing a pay of Rupees eight and one tent pitcher who was paid Rupees ten per month.

There were 200 foot sepoy, 4 naiks, 8 havildars, 40 sowars, 8 daffadars and seven Jemadars a total strength of 274 all ranks.⁹ A foot soldier was drawing Rs 8/ per month as pay where as the pay of sowar was Rs 17/ and daffadar was being paid Rs 22/ and naik Rs 10/ monthly. There were eleven sweepers and surprisingly their pay was more than the pay of foot soldier they were being paid at the rate of Rs 10/ monthly, all these sweepers were enrolled for the post establishment. Eleven Munshis were also enrolled as part of post establishment and were being paid Rs 15/ and banyah also a part of post establishment was also being paid Rs 15/-. An annual recurring charges for uniform amounted to Rs 2210/. The grand total annually was Rs 53642/.

Insight

The political officer report at the end of year is perhaps the only first hand primary source which we have which encompasses the every fibre of British administration in the newly acquired areas. North Waziristan or Tochi Valley was unlike any other mountainous area of the North West. In 1894 the British made forward moves in Gilgit where an hierarchical system existed same was the case in Balochistan but in Waziristan there was no central authority only legal and moral ground which the Raj had was the formal agreement with Daur Tribe. The resistance of other Wazir tribes although segregated into over a dozen clans yet they offered resistance but in a limited manner. Political officer noted and wrote that the Mahsuds and tribes living in Afghanistan are the main cause of trouble regarding the behaviour of Daur in which four fanatics had attacked the political officer and their other petty offenses are attributed to the excessive use of Charas. Tochi Levies was one ray of

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Administrative Report Tochi Valley 1897-98

8

Foreign Frontier Department letter No. 152-153 dated 18th – 20th June 1898, Miran Shah Archives. Also see letters No's 92-102 dated September 1899.

9

Letter No 101 A, From Captain Fergusson Davie Commandant North Waziristan Militia to Political Officer Tochi dated 25th April 1901, in this the reference has been made of Levy Corps strength.

hope in which the induction of locals and the over all conduct of the levies was commendable. ‘ The system of day picquetting upon cart road was developed and picquetting duty performed with far more regularity and success than in the preceding year...a spirit of obedience and discipline was observable which did not formerly exist’¹⁰.

Tochi Levies had forty Sowars which were the striking force mainly used for escort and patrolling. These Sowars were put through an equitation course, it is to be noted that majority of the natives were not as good horsemen as the tribes of Gilgit Agency. The instructors were mainly borrowed from regular army units especially the cavalry. The footmen were put through the drill classes held in rotation at the principal posts. Tochi Levies took part in quite a number of successful pursuits of raiders. One Levy was permanently disabled in rescuing travellers from a gang of robbers armed with breech loading rifles near Surkamar. It speaks high of Tochi Levies that only one prisoner escaped from their custody during the year of 1898. Lal Khan a Jemadar of Tochi Levy was killed in a bold attempt to make a Barampta of a large caravan of Khaisora Mohmit Khel near Tal¹¹. There were grey areas also, two cases of extortion by the Levy from travellers were reported in the year, and both were punished for this severely. The initial reaction of the regular military officers was not very positive regarding the Levies and there was an air of distrust around them. However the regular army picquets were removed during the cold weather in the road above Miran shah and these duties were performed by the Tochi Levies with commendable tactical insight ‘ The comparatively great security of the road especially above Miran Shah during 1898-99 was I believe chiefly due to the better performance of picquet duty by the Levies’¹². Unauthorised leave or absent without official leave was not that uncommon and few desertion also took place mainly when men were not given leave on Eid at Bakka Khel Posta in the lower Daur valley. To counter the regular raids in upper Daur in Hamonzai a tower was built at Samiekon also a post was commenced at Bicha which was regarded as the most important at the head of the Dande Plain but it was not finished due to Kanirogha outrage. Badawan Post was dismantled on its being indefensible.

In January 1899 Mr Cooke took over as Commandant Tochi Levies his pay was 450 Rupees per month, Mr Donald the former Commandant took over as political officer of Tochi Valley, the commandant of Tochi Levies also acted as assistant political officer with powers to give punishment to criminals on major offenses.

There was a requirement for an increase in the numerical strength of the Levies for the reason that the work was incessant and hard thus Wazirs and Daurs the two tribes manning the Levies were reluctant to join apart from the leave issue thus an increase in numbers was seen as a logical end to both grievances. In August the proposal to introduce non Silladari Militia were submitted.

‘Past year have shown that however untaught they are by no means un-teachable and there is every reason to think that reorganisation would be successful. Both classes are capable of strong party feeling which turned into proper channel would become spirit de corps’¹³,

10 *Political Officer Mr Lorimar remarks in a confidential report 1899. Miran Shah Archives.*

11 *Border & Administrative report 1898-1899, Miran Shah Archives.*

12 *Ibid. Remarks by the Political Officer.*

13 *Ibid.*

